N° 94. SATURDAY, *November* 18, 1786.

Vos lene consilium et datis, et dato
Gaudetis. HOR.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

SIR,

THOUGH you, and other writers of your sort, are constantly recommending benevolence and social affection, as not only the most laudable, but as the happiest dispositions of mind; yet I confess I am inclined to doubt at least one half of the proposition. The care we take of our neighbours is oftener praised than rewarded, and sometimes it has the misfortune to meet neither with approbation nor recompence. That I have some reason to say so, Mr. Lounger, I fancy you will be inclined to allow, when I tell you how it has fared with myself.

I was, from my earliest years, disposed to think more of other people's advantage than of my own. When at school, I was the great prompter both of study and of amusement, tho' I was no wise remarkable for excelling in the one, or enjoying the other. I shewed the first boys of our class the easiest way of getting their lessons,

leſſons, and performing their exerciſes; but I ſeldom could be at the trouble to get or to perform my own. I laid excellent plans for new games, truant expeditions, and little plots of miſchief; but being of a weakly conſtitution, and of not a very reſolute mind, I ſeldom was an actor in the amuſement or the adventure: as I had, however, a ſort of vanity, which was flattered by the imputation of the advice, I was often flogged for tricks I had not played, and idle diverſions in which I had not partaken. I was generally pitched on as a ſort of ambaſſador when a play-day was to be aſked, or a boy begged off; becauſe I liked to put myſelf forward, and was readier with my tongue than my hand. But in this office I was very ill rewarded for my trouble; I was ſometimes whipped in place of him whoſe pardon I had the aſſurance to aſk, and often left out of the party whoſe play I had been ſo lucky as to obtain.

Theſe diſappointments, however, did not damp the natural ardour of my diſpoſition to ſerve my friends. Genius, it has been obſerved, rather grows upon controul: my genius was that of giving advice, and it ſeemed rather to increaſe than to abate as I grew up into life. I choſe a profeſſion which was very well calculated for indulging this propenſity, that of a phyſician, and went through a regular courſe of education to qualify myſelf for a degree; which,

which, however, I failed of obtaining at the univerſity in which I ſtudied, having incurred the diſpleaſure of the profeſſors, from being the promoter, as they ſaid, of certain cabals among the ſtudents, which diſturbed the peace of the community. For obtaining that honorary diſtinction, I was obliged to go to a foreign univerſity, where, from a want of the language, I was prevented from giving ſo much good advice as I ſhould otherwiſe have been inclined to beſtow.

When I returned to my native country, I was reſolved to make up for this unprofitable interval of ſilence, by a liberal uſe of my talent for adviſing. But I don't know how it happened, except from that diſpoſition which genius has rather to voluntary than to expected exertion, I had not half the pleaſure in giving advice as a phyſician, that I felt in offering my counſel in any other caſe of doubt or of difficulty. It might perhaps be owing to this that I was little conſulted; and in ſome houſes into which I had got acceſs as a doctor, it was alleged that I raiſed ſuch a ferment by my non-medical advice, as all my ſedatives were unable to allay. On my ſkill as a phyſician I bore attacks without much emotion; but, conſcious of the purity of my intentions, I was ſurpriſed to hear my conduct as a man arraigned; aſtoniſhed, when an adviſer like myſelf cautioned

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me against intermeddling with other people's affairs; told me, that nothing was ſo hurtful to one's ſelf as the telling people diſagreeable truths; and that, if I was not on my guard, I would ſoon be ſhunned as a buſy-body and an incendiary, who ſet every family into which he was admitted by the ears.

In conſequence of the caution offered me by this teller of agreeable truths, I was determined, notwithſtanding my natural philanthropy, to with-hold the counſel of which I ſaw moſt of my neighbours ſtand ſo much in need, when an incident happened that put me a good deal in ſpirits with myſelf, and in favour with the world. An uncle died, and left me heir to a conſiderable ſum which he poſſeſſed in the Funds. By his death I found myſelf to have acquired a great deal of wiſdom and perſuaſion, as well as money; and, while that money laſted, ſeldom met with a man or a woman who did not find my advice perfectly prudent and uſeful. It was indeed frequently given in a way exactly the reverſe of what my profeſſion (which I now followed only for my amuſement) ſhould have taught me. The fee commonly accompanied the preſcription, in the form of a loan, a preſent, a ſubſcription, or ſome ſuch genteel denomination; and I had among my patients perſons of very great conſideration, and of the moſt eminent talents. I ſcarce remem-

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ber any who obſtinately and bluntly refuſed my advice, except one author, whom I earneſtly adviſed to ſuppreſs a dedication he ſhewed me to a ſmall volume of poems, with which he was about to favour the public. This was a matter too in which I thought I had the beſt title to offer my opinion, as the book was to be dedicated to myſelf, and I had ſet down my name for one hundred copies.

In the diſpoſal of the riches with which this unexpected death of my relation had endowed me, I was equally benevolent and diſintereſted as in the other parts of my conduct. The effects of this were, as in other caſes, more beneficial to my friends than to myſelf: by that hoſpitality with which I repaid the gratitude of thoſe whoſe meaſures I prompted or adviſed; by the facility with which I entered into money-engagements, in aid of thoſe meaſures; by becoming a ſharer in ſeveral projects, of which I had the chief management and direction, and in which therefore I generally had the honour of making the firſt and largeſt advances; and by laying out money according to the advice of ſome of the ableſt men in that department (for after I grew rich I had got adviſers too); by all theſe means, Mr. Lounger, in the courſe of ten or twelve years, I found my uncle's inheritance almoſt entirely exhauſted, and I was left in the decline of life with no other proviſion than a very

very ſmall annuity, which the wreck of it enabled me to purchaſe.

I was, however, always of a ſanguine, thoughtleſs diſpoſition, and not eaſily put out of temper with the circumſtances in which fortune had placed me. My annuity, ſmall as it was, enabled me to keep up a decent appearance; and my degree gave me a convenient, and, in this country, a reſpectable appellation. I had gained too ſome experience during the viciſſitudes of my fortune, and in my days of proſperity had, as I mentioned above, known what it was to receive as well as to offer advice. On this experience, and an attention to my own feelings, I built the ſyſtem of my future conduct; and by a diligent attention to the feelings of others, I have been able to purſue it with very tolerable ſucceſs. I ſtill continue my profeſſion of *adviſer*; but I now give advice after a manner perfectly different from that in which I ſet out, not according to the caſe in which I am conſulted, but according to the inclination of him or her who conſults me.

You cannot eaſily imagine, Sir, how much good-will this deportment has gained me. Inſtead of the diſtant acquaintance and cold reception which in the days of my honeſt counſel I generally met with, I now find myſelf ſurrounded by friends and well-wiſhers wherever

I go.

I go. I dine ſix days in the week at good tables, have frequent invitations to parties of pleaſure; nay, I might have even ſome profeſſional advantage, if I was inclined to lay hold of it, and might be fee'd for preſcribing remedies to people of faſhion, of which themſelves have firſt told me the infallibility. I had a preſent of a gold ſnuff-box from an old gouty Lord, for liſtening to his account of the virtues of *ſulphur water*; and my Lady *Notable* lately ſent me a ſuit of damaſk of her own making, for having ſtaid to witneſs ſome experiments with her favourite *worm-powder*.

Not only indeed in medicine, in which I might be ſuppoſed to have ſome knowledge, but in moſt other arts and ſciences, this ſame echo-counſel has given me the character of being very ſkilful and well informed. I have acquired a great character for connoiſſeurſhip in painting, by adviſing the great collector, Mr. *Tinto*, to purchaſe, as an original *Vandyke*, a picture which his ordinary counſellor in theſe matters had inſiſted, in ſpite of his patron's aſſertion, was but a copy; and an author of great reputation has mentioned me as one of the juſteſt critics of his acquaintance, becauſe I gave it as my opinion, that he ſhould by all means retain a ſimile in his new tragedy, which an actor would have had him cut out as too long and unnatural.

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At the theatre my advice is followed, even by that most unadvisable of all professions, the players, ever since I told Mr. —— that he was an incomparable *Macbeth*, and advised Mrs. —— to play *Juliet* in her grand climacteric.

I sometimes make friends, and establish my reputation for taste, as much by dissuading from what should not, as by advising what should be done. I have eat venison half a dozen times at Lord *Visto*'s country-seat, ever since I begged him not to think of building such a clumsy temple as his neighbour Sir *Paul Prospect* has lately erected; and have been very much a man *à bonnes fortunes* in the good graces of *Miss Trippet*, since one morning that I dissuaded her from wearing a gypsey-hat with pink ribbons, which made *Lady Bell Airy* look so frightful at the Assembly a few evenings before.

On one occasion only I recollect my method of giving counsel to have failed of being acceptable: In my young days, when I had the foolish way of advising inconsiderately, I had given a decided opinion against a friend's marrying his maid-servant, who a few days after first shewed his being estranged from me, by leaving me out of the company he invited to the christening of his first child. In my wiser days, I was consulted by another friend on a similar occasion. I advised him by all means to marry. I did not see him

him till a twelvemonth after; he ſeemed to bear me no good-will for my advice; and the firſt token of reconciliation I received from him was a few weeks ago, by a letter to his wife's funeral.

I have thus very candidly communicated to you, Mr. Lounger, my method of giving advice, ſo agreeable to the adviſed, as well as ſo highly advantageous to the adviſer. I communicate it to you from a very friendly motive; becauſe I think I have obſerved, that in many of your Papers you have rather ſhewn a diſpoſition to give counſel to your readers in my firſt manner, which before I had been taught better things made me ſo unwelcome a gueſt, and ſo diſagreeable a companion. Believe me, you will find it much more expedient to perform this friendly office according to the improved ſyſtem which at preſent I follow with ſo much applauſe and ſucceſs. But I forget that it is probable you deſign your Work rather for poſterity than the preſent times; in which caſe, you are certainly very much in the right to adopt the oppoſite plan; and in that view of the matter, it has my entire approbation.

I have the honour to be, &c.

VALERIUS VELVET.

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